seven member Expert Committee. The terms of reference of the Export Committee are as under:—

(i) Measures for meeting the demand-supply gap in coal in the short, medium and long-term.

(ii) Measures to improve productivity of man and machinery in Indian Coal Sector, particularly in Coal India.

(iii) Introduction of cutting edge technology.

(iv) Measures to convert Central Mines Planning and Design Institute Limited (CMPDIL) into a Centre of Excellence for Planning and Research in coal sector.

(v) Restructuring of CIL to make it a World class company.

(vi) Other matters that the committee may consider important for the general improvement in the functioning of the Coal Sector.

(vii) Examining the merits of opening up trading in coal.

(viii) Examining the current policy of captive coal mining and considering recommendations which might reduce the demand-supply gap.

(ix) Examining the recommendations suggested by M/s KPMG Consultancy Pvt. Ltd.

(c) The Committee is expected to submit its first report by the middle of April, 2005.

Fire in coal mines

†616. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that fire in the coal mines of Dhanbad (Bihar) has not been extinguished for many years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of such other mines in the country alongwith approximate quantity of coal getting destroyed every year; and

(d) the action being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) As reported by Coal India Limited, prior to

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

nationalization there were 70 mine fires in Jharia coalfield, which are presently under the jurisdiction of Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL). As a result of the efforts made by BCCL 10 fires have been extinguished and spreading of number of fires have been controlled. At present, there are 40 mines which are affected by fires in Jharia coalfield (Dhanbad) under the jurisdiction of Bharat Coking Coal Limited.

(c) Presently there are no other mines of Coal India Ltd. having active fire except those mentioned in reply to parts (a) & (b) above. There have been cases of mine fires in past in some of the mines having fiery seams which have been controlled and sealed off. It is not possible to make an yearly assessment of coal getting destroyed by fires. However, as per study conducted by Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Limited reserves of coal lost due to fire is estimated at around 37 million tonnes in Jharia Coalfield.

(d) The following steps have been taken to control/extinguish fire in coal mines:

(i) Sand flushing into active fire zone from surface to under ground through boreholes.

(ii) Surface blanketing to prevent breathing in of air to the fire area.

(iii) Inert gas flushing from surface through boreholes to extinguish fire.

(iv) Quenching of spot fire and mining out the quenched coal.

(v) Sealing of the part of the mine under fire by construction of the fire stoppings/isolation stoppings.

(vi) Application of fire resistant sealant in and around the isolation stoppings/fire stoppings.

(vii) Regular monitoring with the help of Co-detectors, toximeter, air sampling and analysis of the same at colliery level.

(viii) Trench cutting by mechanized means to excavate fire and to prevent spread of the same.

(ix) Intentional flooding by water to quench the fire in some mines.

Apart from above action, 16 schemes for dealing with fires and control of subsidence have been sanctioned and funded by the Government. Out of these, 8 schemes have been completed. A Master Plan has also been prepared to deal with fires and control of subsidence in Jharia coalfields as a long term measure.